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AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

ON

PICTORIAL ANATOMY,

DELIVERED TO THE

STUDENTS OF THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

OF THE HONOURABLE

THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE  
ENCOURAGEMENT OF SCOTTISH MANUFACTURES,

AND

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HONOURABLE BOARD.

BY JAMES MILLER, F.R.S.E. F.R.C.S.E.

LECTURER ON THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF SURGERY, ASSISTANT SURGEON  
TO THE ROYAL INFIRMARY, LECTURER ON PICTORIAL ANATOMY, ONE OF  
THE COUNCIL OF THE ROYAL MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY, &c.

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BOARD OF MANUFACTURES, ROYAL INSTITUTION,  
EDINBURGH, 31st May, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR, — I have been instructed by the Honourable the Commissioners of the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Scottish Manufactures, to acquaint you that such of their number as had the good fortune to be present last night, when you delivered the Introductory Lecture of your course of Pictorial Anatomy, to the students of their School of Design, largely partook of the universal gratification which was produced by your eloquence among the very numerous audience who listened to you.

As the Commissioners conceive that it would be highly desirable that the lecture should not be confined to the walls of this building, within which it was spoken, I am further instructed to request, that, if you have no private objection, you will have the goodness to order it to be immediately printed and published, that its usefulness may be more generally diffused.

Believe me always, my dear sir,

Yours most faithfully,

THO. DICK LAUDER,  
*Secretary, Board of Manufactures.*

*To JAMES MILLER, Esq. Surgeon,  
Lecturer on Pictorial Anatomy to the School of Design  
of the Honourable the Commissioners of the Board  
of Manufactures, Royal Institution.*



“The Anatomist presents to the eye the most hideous and disagreeable objects ; but his Science is highly useful to the Painter in delineating even a Venus or an Helen. While the latter employs all the richest colours of his Art, and gives his figures the most graceful and engaging airs, he must still carry his attention to the inward structure of the human body, the position of the muscles, the fabric of the bones, and the use and figure of every part or organ. Accuracy is, in every case, advantageous to beauty. . . . . In vain would we exalt the one by depreciating the other.”



## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

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GENTLEMEN,

I have again the honour — let me add, the pleasure — of appearing in this place as your Teacher of Anatomy. But before entering upon the details of that interesting science, permit me to direct your attention to its paramount importance, in laying the only true foundation of success in the higher grades of Art.

The biographer of Sir Joshua Reynolds has well observed, that pre-eminence in the higher walks of Art is based upon skill in drawing the human figure, with an accurate knowledge of its Anatomy. The great painter's youth — the season when this skill and knowledge are best, if not alone acquired — was permitted to pass without his attaining a qualification so essential ; and in consequence of this neglect, he never had professional strength to execute



works requiring great power of the hand over form, without exposing his deficiency. "In his finest productions, possessing all the splendour of colour, and all the breadth and charm of general effect, imbecility in drawing is manifest, and he was obliged to have recourse to contrivance to conceal, or slightly to pass over, that which he could not express." All the zeal, and all the genius of this great man, it would thus appear, could not atone for the one great error of his professional education. How great a boon it is for the young aspirant of the present day to know, that such need not be his case, and that, indeed, this qualification, so essential, is in a measure forced upon him.

May painting or sculpture ever be inconsistent with nature? Is the "ideal art" — (essential to the higher walks, because inseparable from success in them) — is it different from, as well as beyond nature, or still in harmony with its general laws? Some assert that it consists in a strong and sustained effort of the imagination, carrying the artist beyond nature altogether, to something higher, more grand and beautiful; and that according to the extent to which the boundaries of nature are thus o'erstepped with success, is the merit of the painter. We humbly conceive that no doctrine can be more pernicious.

It is true, that the ancients, though possessed of the finest models, did not slavishly copy any individual specimen of nature, even in a portrait, far less in an



ideal work. In the former, defects were subdued, or altogether omitted, while beauties were enhanced. In the latter, imagination was set freely to work, but not on empty space — not to conjure up ideal forms purely original—but the artist, *selecting* beauties from *various* models, reflecting on what he had seen in individuals, imaginatively bringing them together, and out of many insulated beauties of form creating one ideal whole, attained his object of representing a form superior to and beyond *individual* nature, it is true, yet strictly in accordance with, because an actual representation of nature still.

Polycletus, we are told, resolving to form a statue which should possess all the proportions of a man of perfect symmetry, made use of many patterns of nature. The result of his labours was the celebrated Canon, which was regarded as a general model for all those who wished to perfect themselves in the art. “The sculptors,” says Maximus Tyrius, “by an admirable artifice, choose out of several bodies those parts which seem to them the most beautiful, and combine this variety in one statue; but this union of parts is effected with so much judgment and propriety, that those artists seem to have no other model than one whole and perfect beauty.” Nor do these remarks apply to the sculptors alone. In painting also, the ideal was immediately derived from reality. “Behold,” said Eupompus to Lysippus, when consulted by the young sculptor on the subject of imitation, pointing to the passing multitude

— “Behold my models. From nature, not from art, must he study, who aspires to true excellence.”

Under certain circumstances, doubtless, these selected points of beauty were slightly exaggerated; for example, when it was the intention to exhibit a being beyond this world's mould — as Diana, or the Pythian Apollo. Hence we find in such deities, veins subdued or altogether omitted, the muscular outlines but faintly traced, the proportions of certain parts and features altered from the usual standard, with a mild serenity of countenance superior to ordinary passion — all to mark a difference from frail humanity. Yet there are no additional bones to the skeleton — no multiplication of joints or muscles — no removal from or addition to the external organs — the change is carried no farther than what is still consistent with nature.

Now, herein appears the manifest advantage of Anatomical knowledge as a groundwork; rendering the proper ideal art more easy of execution, and diminishing the risk of error in the attempt.

Were ideal art simply imaginative, Anatomy could be of little avail. For what mattered it whether the form attained were correct or not, provided it pleased the eye, and succeeded in arousing that train of thought in the beholder which it was the object of the artist to excite. But such a result cannot be obtained without adherence to the laws of Nature. For, as has been well observed by Mr Hazlitt, “the ideal is not the preference of that

which exists only in the mind to that which exists in nature; but the preference of that which is fine in nature to that which is less so." And hence it is that a knowledge of the Anatomy of Nature is necessary to the construction of the true ideal. An artist ignorant of Anatomy would be sorely perplexed to reconcile his ideal with the natural form, and many failures might not — most probably, would not — result in ultimate success; whilst, on the contrary, he who knows the nature as well as the form of joints, bones, muscles, and skin,—their relative position, and the change therein which motion induces, would have comparatively little difficulty in the execution of his task.

If, on the contrary, all art were but a mere transcript of individual nature, without the ideal selection from nature at large, again would Anatomy sink into insignificance, as a guide to the artist. For all his labour then would be, leisurely to transfer the object before him to his canvass or the marble. A man may paint a mere likeness of another's face, another may chisel it in stone, faithfully and accurately, and yet be ignorant in all respects of its Anatomy. A landscape painter may transfer to his canvass an exact representation of a particular view, and yet know nothing of the geological structure, — just as a man may laboriously copy a portion of Greek or Hebrew, correctly enough, without understanding its import, or its parts of speech. But, in art, no one can leave individual



nature, and imaginatively depict something superior to it, yet consistent with nature at large, without a previous and intimate acquaintance with those parts which he has to modify and vary in arrangement.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, perhaps, went too far in his enthusiastic description of ideal art, representing it as superior to nature — worshipping the grand style of Michael Angelo, and speaking all but contemptuously of Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt. And it has not unreasonably been supposed that this has been productive of injury. Yet we doubt not the fault has been with his interpreters, more than with himself; and that his real meaning, however ambiguously expressed, was to discountenance the slavish imitation of individual nature, which, though conducted with the most consummate skill in art, can never reach to any thing that is great or grand; and to inculcate the propriety of the artist's proposing to himself a high standard of imaginative excellence, to which he should endeavour to attain by ideal combinations of what taste and experience have led him to select from various forms; until at length,

“Adopting Nature owns the work her own.”

In this, the highest walk of art, none have reached such excellence as Raphael and Michael Angelo; the former having attained the greater measure of success, because in his loftiest flights still in accordance with Nature. “All that imagination could lend to a strictly imitative art he has added, yet

has infused into its creations the warmest sensibilities of life; to nature he has given all that grace and fancy can bestow, *consistent with the sweetest of all charms, leaving her nature still.*"

"He dared much,  
But with that dauntless temper of his mind  
He had a *wisdom* that still brought his valour  
To act in *safety*."

To the great Buonarotti no one will deny the merit of having carried ideal design to the loftiest pitch of daring. But whether the matchless intrepidity of his creations may not have seduced his imitators into sins of extravagance and exaggeration, may well be matter of controversy. Some votaries may have been consumed by the fire of the same altar which shed only its light and warmth upon more favoured worshippers. With his mighty genius, with his great experience and enthusiasm in art, and with his intimate knowledge of the Anatomy of the human frame, (for let not that be forgotten as one of the foremost of the qualifications of this great Master,) he could not only venture to approach the verge of propriety, but occasionally to disport himself on the other side. While contemplating his wondrous creations, the spectator quails beneath their grandeur—he trembles as he adores—and although he acknowledges the commanding power of the mighty Tuscan, he still languishes for nature.

In his earlier works, before the thirst for epic grandeur had taken undivided possession of his soul, we find that his conceptions are less overcharged,

and harmonize better with the truth of Nature. Hence they commend themselves more warmly to our sympathies. Take, for example, the “Dead Christ.” And who is there, rapt in this mysterious scene, that does not feel, that it is because the Son of God is here faithfully represented as suffering man, that our souls are touched with the softest and holiest emotion?

In the latest works of the same Master, when his daring genius had been tamed by the influence of advancing age, we find a greater degree of sobriety and chasteness of style. He himself perceived his brilliant errors. He also saw and lamented, too late, the fall prepared for sculpture. Where he had trod with safety, his less gifted followers sank. By him, art had been placed on a proud, but dangerous height; from that it fell; and, after a few years of progressive degeneracy, it dwindled away into absolute insignificance,—just in proportion as the artists departed from Nature, and from the great masters who had copied her, to mould their works on academic rules, and the phantoms of abstract perfection.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, too, seems to have feared that he may have expressed himself in terms too unmeasured regarding ideal art, in his admirable Discourses; and accordingly, towards their conclusion, we find the following passage. After commiserating those painters who declare that they have discarded Nature because she only put them out, he adds,—“He who recurs to Nature, at every recurrence renews his strength. The rules of Art he is never



likely to forget; they are few and simple. But Nature is refined, subtle, and infinitely various, beyond the power and retention of memory; it is necessary, therefore, to have continual recourse to her, and in this intercourse there is no end of his improvement."

In his own works, Sir Joshua adhered closely to Nature; and thus, by his practice and theory combined, may be said to have corrected the errors of two opposite classes of artists. The one, mere copyists of tame unexpressive Nature; the other, unnatural — "having carried the abstract principle of improving upon Nature to such a degree of refinement, that they left her out altogether; and confounded all the irregularities and varieties of form, feature, character, expression, and attitude, in the same artificial mould of fancied grace and fashionable insipidity — giving the air of an Adonis to the driver of a hay-cart, and modelling the features of a milkmaid on the principles of the Antique;" forgetting the all-important axiom which a study of Nature is so well calculated to teach —

"Beauty's best handmaid is simplicity."

But let us not, in avoiding one danger, run rashly on another. There are extremes in Art as in other matters. Excess of the ideal is one. Servile adherence to individual nature is another.

"Shun all excess — and with true wisdom deem  
That Vice alike resides in each extreme."

“He,” says Proclus, “who takes for his model such forms as Nature produces, and confines himself to an exact imitation of them, will never attain to what is perfectly beautiful.” Instead of endeavouring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavour to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas. Instead of seeking praise by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame by captivating the imagination. “It is intellectual dignity that ennobles the painter’s art—that lays the line between him and the mere mechanic—and produces those great effects in an instant, which eloquence and poetry, by slow and repeated efforts, are scarcely able to attain.”

I need hardly remind you, that it is this humble imitation of actual Nature in all its details, that lowers the character of the Flemish and Dutch Schools, in other respects replete with most skilful artists. And it is this which has exposed their greatest masters to such criticisms as the following:—“Rubens, after spouting Virgil with enthusiasm, turned to his canvass, and painted a Flemish butcher with bandy legs for Æneas; and gave Dutch Helens, Flemish Junos, and German Diomedes, for classic art.” And the same critic we find comparing some of Rembrandt’s female beauties to dirty fishwomen—his Abrahams to Dutch old clothesmen.

——— “Not such the Master’s care.

Curious, he culls the perfect from the fair;

Judge of his art, through beauty's realms he flies,  
Selects, combines, improves, diversifies.

Even the ancient Greeks, with all their admirable skill, seem sometimes to have neglected the maxim embodied by the Poet, and to have copied too much from one model, instead of selecting from several. An example of this is afforded by the "Youth Extracting a Thorn from his Foot," where the figure is most natural and pleasing; yet the anatomical eye discovers that there is a want of muscularity in the arms; a deficiency common to many at that age, and so far quite consistent with individual nature, but, nevertheless, not in harmony with the rest of the figure, and therefore an imperfection. A still more striking instance, is the Discobulus of Naucydes, where all the upper parts of the body seem faultless, while the feet are ungainly almost to deformity, such as are not unfrequently found in those who follow laborious occupations, and whose other members are fully and fairly formed. These, however, are but trifling exceptions to the general rule in regard to that period of consummate art.

Thus, then, we are brought to conclude, that real excellence in art consists neither in slavish imitation of individual nature, nor in visionary departure from Nature to the realms of abstract imagination. In neither of these courses would Anatomy prove of much value to the artist. But excellence consists in something midway between these two extremes; and, applied to that, Anatomy is found to be of much importance. For an example, let us take the



“ Youth Extracting a Thorn.” Here is a model with but one deficiency. The artist is not to copy all, including the defect ; but, by his previous acquaintance with other nature, is, in place of that defect, to substitute ideal perfection. The muscular development in the arms is to be increased ; but to do so, it is not enough merely to enlarge the outlines of the limbs, as already existing,—as would be the likely procedure of one ignorant of Anatomy. This would enlarge the arm ; but, though a larger, it would still remain and seem a weak one. The lines marking the bones are not to be conjoined with those of the muscles ; the former remain as they were ; the latter only are increased, and modified in form in consequence of that increase. Thus, and thus only, will the idea, as well as the form of strength, be given to that which formerly was in this respect defective.

But there are other reasons why long and careful study of the best models of the antique will not atone for neglect in the study of Anatomy ; nay, is even apt to mislead. The man who is ignorant of Anatomy, seeing nothing but what is on the surface, and unable to explain it by the arrangement of the parts beneath, is apt to think that he cannot do better than adopt it as his unvarying model, and perhaps reproduces it in an attitude very different,—when, of course, another set of muscles being called into play, another set of tendons and ligaments being put upon the stretch, the form of the part must materially change ; and thus, what was truth and beauty in one attitude, now necessarily becomes

deformity. “On the other hand, the student of Anatomy sees at once the cause of the form of the part, and of the changes which it undergoes ; or could even say, *a priori*, in a certain position of the limb, such and such muscles being in action, such being the shapes of the extremities of the bones, and such the disposition of the ligaments, such must be the form of the whole. I surely need not add, that, in the first case, even after years of labour, there must often be error, always difficulty ; while, in the second, the labour is incalculably lightened and the confidence of knowledge inspired ; the one, in short, is an empiric, the other is a man of science.”

A power of *sketching* will readily be admitted as essential to the higher walks of art, in the invention, composition, and general arrangement of the subject, previous to undertaking the actual design. Freedom and power, beauty and vigour, flow from the pencil of him who is versed in the requisite knowledge of Anatomy, while hesitation, error, and debility, will characterize the most laboured efforts of one who is therein ignorant. It has been said by a high authority on this subject—the late justly celebrated, and now justly lamented, Sir Charles Bell—“that which in the finished picture is to be the mere indication of muscular action, ought to have its foundation laid in the sketch, by a correct and strong representation of the full action. The anatomy should always be strongly marked in the original design ; and even a little exaggeration of it is sometimes not only agreeable, but useful.” A prominent example of this will occur to

any one who passes even hastily through the collection of ancient pictures in the room adjoining. The Sebastian of Vandyck is plainly a sketch, and as plainly from the hand of a master. In the outline of the principal figure, he seems to have toyed with his anatomical knowledge, obtaining thereby such freedom and vigour of expression, as subsequent detail would have easily softened into manly perfection. "He that is sure of the goodness of his ship and tackle, puts out fearlessly from the shore ; and he who knows that his hand can execute whatever his fancy can suggest, sports with more freedom in embodying the visionary forms of his own creation."

That anatomical knowledge must prove highly beneficial to all who desire to make art the medium of *expression*, is so obvious as to require no comment ; this one reflection being sufficient, that on intricate muscular action, correct expression almost entirely depends. Of course, I do not limit the term "expression" to the action of the muscles of the face alone, but extend it to those of the whole frame, remembering the well-known quotation, "*patuit in corpore vultus*."

It may be objected, that if nature and its anatomy be the foundation, as thus alleged, of true design, why are not works of sculpture produced now, equal or superior to those of the ancient Greeks ; seeing that, with an improved knowledge of Anatomy, we have the same school open to us that was open to them ; for Nature denies her instructions to none who desire to become her pupils. To this we frankly



confess, that a knowledge of this science, however profound, is not enough, combined with *mere* nature,—we must have *beautiful nature*, on which to ground our conceptions of form; these we may mould together by means of our knowledge of the human structure; “but it is Nature alone who combines them with perfect truth and delicacy, in all the varieties of motion and expression.” And there is little doubt that such nature as the Greeks possessed is not within the reach of modern artists.

The body was then cultivated in preference to the mind. All had a taste for its beauty, and were anxious to improve it. Of the four wishes of Simonides, the second was to have a handsome figure. The youth, by manly exercise, were trained to full symmetrical development; and the first rewards were decreed to those who excelled in agility and strength. Statues were often raised to wrestlers; and even the most eminent men in Greece sought renown in the gymnasia. Chrysippus and Cleanthes distinguished themselves there before they were known as philosophers. Plato appeared as a wrestler, both at the Isthmian and Pythian games; and Pythagoras carried off the prize at Elis. Children who gave promise of beauty, were allowed to contest for a prize, and he who won it had a statue erected to him. The Lacedemonian women kept in their chambers the statues of Nereus, of Narcissus, of Hyacinthus, and of Castor and Pollux, hoping, that by often contemplating these, they might have beautiful children. And both sexes

were happily exempt from those dire attempts, too often successful in the present day, to change simple chaste nature into an unnatural thing of manner and affectation, as practised among our teachers of *accomplishments* in their various schools of deformity.

There seems also much truth in the sayings of Rubens on this subject: "The chief reason why men of our age are different from the ancients, is sloth and want of exercise; for most men give no other exercise to their body, but eating and drinking. No wonder, therefore, if we see so many paunch bellies, weak and pitiful legs and arms, that seem to reprove themselves with their idleness. Nature furnished the human body, in those early ages, when it was nearer its origin and perfection, with every thing that could make it a perfect model; but now, being decayed and corrupted by a succession of so many ages, vices, and accidents, hath lost its efficiency, and only scatters those perfections among many, which it used formerly to bestow upon one."

Besides, the ancient sculptors had unlimited access to the best models. Of this we have a remarkable proof in the Gallery of Casts. Personal charms, disputed by two fair daughters of Syracuse, were at once displayed to a sculptor as the judge; one was found pre-eminent; forthwith she was chiselled in marble; and thence arose the Venus Kallipyge. I need not say how wide is the difference as to the manners of the present time.

A combination of circumstances, so highly favourable to Art, cannot now occur. Hence it is unjust,

from inevitable inferiority of modern to ancient sculpture, to conclude, that anatomical knowledge can be of but little avail to the artist. On the contrary, it is of more use now than ever. As models deteriorate, the mind must labour more and more to correct their deficiency; and we have already shewn, that to succeed in this, a scientific acquaintance with the human structure is indispensable.

It may also be objected, that anatomical knowledge leads to stiffness and pedantry in Art, — too much being sacrificed to an ill-judged display of the science. A similar objection may be made to any of the numerous qualifications necessary to the excellent artist. When any one of these is cultivated in excess, to the exclusion of others, defect and failure are the inevitable result. It is not enough that he be skilled in one of the elements of his art; he must be learned in them all. He who is most so, is the least likely to make an unwarrantable display of any. And in proportion as he is but partially informed in regard to one, so much the more tempted will he be to exhibit his little of that ostentatiously. “One who is an adroit master of his weapon will not enter rashly upon its use, but being engaged from necessity or conviction, will bring himself through with courage and address.”

Truly a little learning is a dangerous thing. In order to escape this danger, the safest way is to make that little much; and though the knowledge of Anatomy requisite for the artist is comparatively limited — when the vast field of that most extensive



science is considered — yet he must know that little *well*; it is only a *little of that little* that can prove detrimental.

Still, it may be urged, that Anatomy is principally of use in the more minute details of the human form; and that these being, in high art, uniformly held as very subordinate to the grand whole, it can matter little whether or not the artist be learned therein. No one will seek to dispute, that detail is and ought to be subordinate to general effect; but from this it by no means follows, that detail is to be neglected as a thing almost unnecessary. At one time, Art seemed to be tending too much in this way. But now, it would appear to be almost generally admitted, that detail, though secondary to general effect, yet is necessary towards it — that the one cannot well, exist without the other — and that most certainly they are by no means incompatible.

The great style in painting consists neither in giving nor avoiding details, but in something quite different from both. Any one may avoid the details. So far, there is no difference between the Cartoons and an ordinary sign painting. Greatness consists in giving the larger masses and proportions with truth; this does not prevent giving the smaller ones also. The utmost grandeur of outline, and the broadest masses of light and shade, are perfectly compatible with the utmost minuteness and delicacy of detail, as may be seen in Nature. If the form of the eyebrow be correctly given, it will be perfectly

indifferent to the truth or grandeur of the design, whether it consist of one broad mark, or be composed of a number of lines. The anatomical details of Michael Angelo, the ever varying outline of Raphael, the perfect execution of the Greek statues, do not destroy their symmetry or dignity of form; and in the finest specimens of the composition of colour, we may observe the largest masses combined with the greatest variety in the parts, of which those masses are composed.

Were this point still disputed, it would surely be enough to refer to the Elgin marbles; where the details of the subordinate parts, the loose hanging folds of the skin, the veins under the belly or on the sides of horses, more or less swelled as the animal is more or less in action, are given with scrupulous exactness — almost resembling casts taken from the life. And yet who ventures to say that these are not replete with beauty and with grandeur?

Thus, then, even were we to admit that knowledge of Anatomy is chiefly adapted to detail, still we should find it most important to the artist. “The human figure — so astonishing in its structure, combining so many principles and powers — so beautiful and engaging in its contours and colours — so varied by age, sex, motion, and sentiment — cannot be represented from cursory and ignorant observation; it must be *understood* before it can be *imitated*.”

Let us briefly inquire if the history of Art will bear us out in this assertion.

The ancient Egyptians, we are told, had but little knowledge of the human form; their figures were but superficial transcripts of individual Nature. And while we thus learn their inferiority in Art, we are at the same time made aware that they dared not touch a dead body for the purpose of dissection, and even the embalmers risked their lives from the hatred of the populace.

In Greece it was that Art first approached perfection. And there its golden age extended from the time of Pericles to that of Alexander the Great. We find that, during the same period, Anatomy had begun to be cultivated, both by the physician, and as a branch of general science. The anatomical observations of Thales, Pythagoras, and Alcmeon, prepared the way for the more connected inquiries of Hippocrates, who gave oral instructions in Anatomy, as well as the art of healing — and thus disclosed its mysteries to the world. And Diocles Carystus, the most distinguished of his successors, was as celebrated for proficiency in Anatomy as for his skill in Surgery. Hippocrates was all but cotemporary with Phidias — Diocles with Praxiteles and Lysippus. It was not Anatomy as it appeared under Vesalius in the sixteenth century. It was not sufficient for the purpose of either the physician or the surgeon; and consequently, we find the healing art then poor and impotent as compared with its present condition. It extended little farther than a knowledge of the skeleton, muscles, and larger internal organs; for all the minutiae of the science were as yet unexplored.



raised Anatomy on a new foundation, and thereby began an era almost as bright for medical science as for Art. Surely this was not a mere coincidence. 7

Since that time there has been little obstruction to the study of Anatomy, and for that very reason, probably, it may not have been cultivated as it ought, unless by those whose peculiar calling rendered such study absolutely imperative. May not neglect of Anatomy by the artist, then, be connected with decline of art in its higher departments? We will not stop to inquire, but rather hasten to a more pleasing consideration, that now, within these few years—thanks to an enlightened legislature—all obstacles to this study have been removed—much that was disgusting both to the moral and physical sense has been taken away—its interesting paths are widely open to all who will enter them,—and, other circumstances being favourable, may we not now hope to see an epoch in the history of art in this country, as great, perhaps greater, than any that has gone before in Italy or in Greece.

Having thus, I trust, shewn, both from reason and experience, that a certain amount of anatomical knowledge is most important, nay, essential, to art, let me free myself from any suspicion of an attempt to arrogate for it a higher place than it merits; I am fully aware that it is but one in a long series of qualifications.

It has been said by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that an “artist ought to know something concerning the mind, as well as the body of man.” Surely he ought to be

intimate with both. In the words of Mr Hazlitt, “something more is wanted than the clay figure, the anatomical mechanism, the regular proportions measured by a two-foot rule, large canvasses covered with stiff figures, arranged in deliberate order, with the characters and story correctly expressed by uplifted eyes or hands, according to old receipt books for the passions, and with all the hardness and inflexibility of figures carved in wood, and painted over in good strong body colours, that look as if ‘some of Nature’s journeymen had made them, and not made them well.’ We still want a Prometheus to give life to the cumbrous mass — to throw an intellectual light over the opaque image — to embody the inmost refinements of thought to the outward eye — to lay bare the very soul of passion.”

But while I thus readily admit that Anatomy is but a component part of this great work, I as resolutely maintain that it is indispensable to its completion. It is a stone that must be in the fabric and placed near the foundation. And if, in the course of these lectures, I can only succeed in effectually convincing but a few pupils of the Academy of this one truth, and so force them to acquire this qualification, while they are yet in the most favourable state for its attainment, I shall consider that good service has thereby been done to Art, and shall value that result, as a reward, far beyond all toil and all anxiety.

Great though the British School of Art has already been, a fair prospect has been opened up of still

higher excellence. Year by year this country is rising higher in the upward flight; and it would indeed be a sad and gloomy day did our Art begin to retrograde; for hitherto, experience of this world's history has been, that with the decay of Art, fail freedom, letters, laws,—in a word, national prosperity.

And is not Scotland doing at least her own share of the work? It is true we have lost a “name, in which Scotland had a high and an endearing pride, which England delighted to honour, and which was cherished in the breast of every reflecting man throughout the whole civilized world.” Our own Wilkie is gone. He who “made the cottage hearth his grave theme—who surrounded the lives and cares, and daily toils and occupations of the poor, with dignity and beauty—who indeed found sermons in stones, books in the running streams, and good in every thing—and who left in all his works the same breathing of health, as in the air wafted from the heather of his native land.” He is gone. But “he has left behind him a name and a fame as pure and unsullied as the bright sky which shines above the painter's grave. He has filled our minds and memories with what is mournful, yet as soothing as the rolling of the blue waters over his honoured head.” Scotland, though in sorrow, cannot be despondent. More than one son is left her of the noblest promise; and to them she looks in confidence. How many Wilkies may there not be now struggling onward in the path of fame? The exhibition of our Royal Academy, makes rapid progress both in



the number and merit of its works, and will bear, nay challenge competition with any in the empire. The public are aroused to feel aright the value and the power of Art, and to afford that support and encouragement which is at once due to Art and worthy of themselves. This noble Institution, within whose walls, under whose auspices, we have the privilege of meeting, has long stretched its fostering arm over Native Art ; and more particularly have its Directors, with as much wisdom as benevolence, devoted peculiar attention, and afforded inestimable advantages to the education of youth. None can now complain of educational error or privation in their outset — none ought to feel want of support in the course of their career.

Nor is this in vain. Such combinations in favour of Art have not been fruitless. It has risen, and is rising ; for its sons have answered nobly the summons to exertion. From the accomplished and amiable President of the Academy, to the youngest aspirant to a place on its walls, all shew true energy and zeal in the promotion of their noble calling—all seem imbued with the honourable ambition to excel ;

“ The noble thirst, the fever of the soul ;  
Not to be quench’d, but from the immortal spring  
Of everlasting greatness.”

THE END.